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ABSTRACT

Education and vocational training have long been regarded as the most direct paths to employment and to greater participation in the economic benefits of Canadian society. Until the educational disparities between Indians and non-Indians have been removed, the most damning indictment of the failure of British Columbia's educators will continue to be existence of native Indians as the single most poorly housed and most frequently unemployed, unhealthy, alienated, impoverished group of British Columbians. Many studies have commented upon the low levels of education prevalent in British Columbian Indian communities. Median level of education reported among British Columbia adult Indians in the 1950's was grade five. By 1971, 18.9% of the adult Indian population had less than five years of schooling, while 41.37% had greater than nine years. Three factors contributed experience of native adults between 1961 and 1971: the 46% increase in the adult population, with a proportionately larger number of more educated young adults; the decline, due to mortality, of older adults who had little or no education; and the significant increased participation in academic upgrading programs (9,133 enrollees from a population of approximately 30,000 adults from 1964-1976). Evidence from the 1971 census data indicated that rural Indians with higher levels of education are moving to urban areas and those living in urban areas tend to complete more years of schooling. (NEC)

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EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF ADULT STATUS INDIANS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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BY

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Introduction

Over the last fifteen years many studies have commented upon the low levels of education prevalent in Indian communities. Anderson and Niemi,[1] in a review of literature on the disadvantaged, reported that in 1949 of 13,770 Indians in Canada aged between 17 and 21 only 58 were enrolled in some form of post-secondary education.

In 1960 Hawthorn published the results of a study of B. C. Indians conducted in the mid 1950's.[2] For a sample of 1,165 adults over the age of fifteen the median level of education reported was grade five. Females reported higher level of educational attainment (5.3 grades) than male respondents (4.9 grades). Levels of education were found to be inversely related with age, with fifteen to twenty five year olds reporting 6.5 grades; twenty-six to thirty-five year olds 5.3 grades; thirty-six to forty-five year olds 4.4 grades, and for forty-six year olds and over 1.3 grades. Of 761 adults over the age of twenty five in the sample only five had completed grade twelve.

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[1] Anderson D. and John A. Niemi, Adult Education and the Disadvantaged Adult, Eric Clearinghouse on Adult Education (Syracuse, New York, 1969).

[2] Hawthorn H. B., C. S. Belshaw, and S. N. Jamieson, The Indians of British Columbia: A Study of Contemporary Social Adjustment. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and University of British Columbia, 1960).

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A further indication of the extent of the low levels of educational attainment of Indian communities in British Columbia during the 1960's was provided by the Hawthorn Report in 1966.[1] In a national sample of Indian bands, the seven B. C. bands selected for inclusion had a range of .73 per cent to 6.1 per cent of their populations aged sixteen and over in school, and a range of only zero per cent to 7.1 per cent of their population had levels of education greater than grade nine.

According the the 1961 Census 36.7 per cent of B. C. Indian adults had completed less than five years of schooling and only 18.9 per cent had completed more than nine years. Ten years later the 1971 Census revealed a major reversal of these proportions. By 1971 18.9 per cent of the adult population had less than five years of schooling while 41.37 per cent had greater than nine years (see table 1).

TABLE 1

CENSUS OF CANADA DISTRIBUTION OF NATIVE INDIAN ADULTS

BY YEAR OF SCHOOLING COMPLETED AND CENSUS YEAR

CENSUS YEAR	YEARS OF SCHOOLING							
	5 Years		5 - 8 Years		8 Years		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1961	7,548	36.7	9,130	44.4	3,891	18.9	20,569	100.0
1971	5,670	18.9	11,925	39.7	12,415	41.4	30,010	100.0

[1] Hawthorn H. B., ed. A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada, Vol. I (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, Queens Printer, 1966).

The 1971 Census data on the distribution of native Indians by rural and urban locations and by years of schooling shows a strong relationship between urban location and higher levels of education (see table 2). Twenty per cent of all males and 24.0 per cent of all females with less than five years of schooling completed were reported living in urban areas, as compared to 46.0 per cent of all males and 51.0 per cent of all females with greater than nine years of schooling who were reported to be urban dwellers.

TABLE 2

1971 CENSUS OF CANADA DISTRIBUTION OF NATIVE INDIAN AND NON-INDIAN ADULTS BY YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED AND LOCATION

LOCATION	ETHNIC STATUS	YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED							
		< 5 Years		5 - 8 Years		> 9 Years		Totals	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Urban	Indian	1,235	11.2	3,900	35.1	5,965	53.7	11,100	100.0
	Non-Indian	43,735	3.6	224,160	18.6	939,210	77.8	1,207,110	100.0
Rural	Indian	4,435	23.5	8,025	42.4	6,450	34.1	18,915	100.0
	Non-Indian	12,660	3.8	80,540	23.8	244,750	72.4	337,940	100.0
Totals	Indian	5,670	18.9	11,925	39.7	12,415	41.4	30,010	100.0
	Non-Indian	56,395	3.7	304,700	19.7	1,183,960	76.6	1,545,055	100.0

Between 1962 and 1976 the proportion of status Indians living off-reserve increased from 14.2 per cent to 35.0 per cent of the total population. While the population has been growing at an annual rate of approximately 2.5 per cent the off-reserve population has been growing at an annual rate of approximately 12.0 per cent. There is clear evidence from this data that rural Indians with higher levels of education are moving to urban areas and it is also possible that those presently living in urban areas tend to complete

more years of schooling than their rural counterparts.

Stanbury[1] in a 1971 study of 1,095 B. C. Status Indians living off-reserve reported that 25.3 per cent of the sample had less than a grade six level of education, 36.8 per cent had completed grades seven, eight or nine, and 38.0 per cent had greater than a grade ten level of education. Although not directly comparable, because of the way in which educational experience was quantified (years of schooling and highest grade completed) a cursory comparison of the Stanbury and the Census of Canada data suggests that the Stanbury sample data falls within acceptable estimates of the levels of educational attainment of B. C.'s total urban Indian population as reported in the 1971 Census (see table 3).

TABLE 3

LEVELS OF EDUCATION OF URBAN INDIANS IN B. C.

Stanbury Study of Urban Indians (N = 1,095)		1971 Census Report on Urban Indians (N = 11,100)	
"Highest Grade Completed"		"Years of Schooling Completed"	
	Percent		Percent
< 7	25.2	< 5	11.1
7 - 9	36.8	5 - 8	35.1
10 - 11	21.0	> 8	53.7
> 11	17.0		
	100.0		100.0

[1] Stanbury W. T. The Education Gap: Urban Indians in British Columbia, B. C. Studies, 19 Autumn 1973 pp 21 - 49.

Of the 1,095 adults in Stanbury's sample, 385 (35%) reported having taken a total of 550 special courses or vocational training courses. Two or more courses had been taken by 125 respondents, and three or more by 36 of the respondents. Of the 385 respondents, 231 had taken one or more full time trades training courses, 42 had taken "upgrading" courses, and 34 had taken "adult education" courses. The reported completion rates for all courses was 92 per cent, and for "upgrading" 83.8 per cent. Such high completion rates are not representative of native trainees in Basic Training for Skill Development (BTSD) where completion rates are generally closer to 60 per cent than 80 per cent. It should also be noted that only 42 respondents in the Stanbury sample had participated in "upgrading" courses when over 9,000 Indian 'enrollees' have participated in academic upgrading and BTSD courses during the past twelve years in British Columbia. Further, the number of BTSD enrollees exceeds the number of enrollees in training courses during the last twelve years.

Three factors have contributed to the major improvement in the levels of educational experience of native adults during the last ten years. The adult population has increased by 46 per cent and this large influx of young adults into the adult population has benefitted from increased rates of retention in the provincial education system, thereby gaining considerably more educational experience than previous generations. Table 4 shows enrollments in federal and provincial schools in B. C. over the period 1946-76. During this period enrollments in high schools (grades 8 and higher) as a percentage of total enrollments has increased from 3.4 per cent in 1946 to 31.5 per cent in 1976.

The second factor contributing to the reported improvements in levels of educational experience is the decline due to mortality of older adults who had little or no formal educational experience. Thirdly, participation in both part-time[1] and full time BTSD and other academic upgrading programs has

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[1] Blunt, Adrian and Donald P. McKinnon, "Indian Adult Education in British Columbia", The Journal of Education, 18 (U.B.C., Faculty of Education 1971 pp 7-19).

TABLE 4

B. C. NATIVE INDIAN SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS[1] BY GRADE LEVEL AT TEN YEAR INTERVALS OVER THIRTY YEAR PERIOD 1946/1976.

ACADEMIC YEARS	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	SPECIAL CLASSES	TOTAL
1946-47	-	1,576	714	598	449	405	277	154	114	32	-	-	-	-	-	4,319
1956-57	143	1,387	949	873	968	737	654	364	260	121	74	34	27	-	-	6,591
1966-67	543	1,806	1,492	1,314	1,137	1,177	1,081	966	752	566	358	218	100	11	516	12,037
1976-77	1,618	1,199	965	933	910	976	1,089	1,108	1,069	932	651	415	230	-	272	12,367

ENROLLMENTS IN GRADES 8 AND HIGHER AND GRADES 10 AND HIGHER AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ANNUAL ENROLLMENTS IN GRADES 1 TO 13

	Grades 8 and Higher		Grades 10 and Higher	
1946-47	146	3.4%	0	0.0 %
1956-57	516	8.0%	135	2.05%
1966-67	2,005	18.3%	687	5.71%
1976-77	3,297	31.5%	1,295	10.47%

[1] Includes Federal and Provincial Schools.

increased significantly over the last decade with approximately 9,133 enrollees from a population of approximately 30,000 adults taking advantage of full time academic upgrading opportunities.

Participation in Full Time B.T.S.D. and Academic Upgrading Programs

The records of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DINA) show a total of 4,737 enrollments in full time BTSD and academic upgrading programs during the period 1964 to 1976. From a total of 97 in 1964-65 the number of enrollees increased rapidly to a maximum for any one fiscal year of 673 enrollees in 1972-73. Since that time there has been a steady annual decline in the number of trainees sponsored with 282 enrollees being assisted in 1976-77. (See Table 5) Variations in the proportion of successful completions have been as great as 30 per cent between BTSD levels within fiscal years, and as great as 35 per cent within BTSD levels between fiscal years. The average rate of successful completions over the twelve year period has been 63.1 per cent.

Status Indian adults have exactly the same rights to receive services and assistance under the Adult Occupational Training Act (A.O.T.A.) from the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC)* as all other Canadian citizens. Prior to 1978 no records have been maintained by the Employment Training Branch of the ethnic origin of its clients. Consequently it is almost impossible to identify the numbers of individual Indian adults who have applied for and have been granted training assistance. Since 1967 it has been the practice of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to refer all BTSD candidates to Canada Employment for training assistance, and to provide assistance only to those individuals who fail to meet the age and labour market status requirements of the A.O.T. Act. Today Indian District Councils control the DINA training funds and certain councils do not provide assistance to their band members for BTSD training, consequently in those regions only those band members sponsored by Canada Employment enter training

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* Formerly the Department of Manpower and Immigration.

TABLE 5

ADULT INDIAN ENROLLMENTS IN FULL TIME BASIC EDUCATION COURSES[1] 1964-76

YEAR	DINA Enrollments in Colleges and Vocational Schools		CEIC Community Based		CEIC *Estimated Enrollments in Colleges and Vocational Schools		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1964-65	97	100	0	0	0	0	97	100
1965-66	89	100	0	0	0	0	89	100
1966-67	149	100	0	0	0	0	149	100
1967-68	231	82	0	0	50	18	281	100
1968-69	361	80	0	0	90	20	451	100
1969-70	413	73	0	0	150	27	563	100
1970-71	524	58	179	20	195	22	898	100
1971-72	664	55	333	28	215	17	1,212	100
1972-73	673	54	343	27	230	19	1,246	100
1973-74	513	47	292	27	285	26	1,090	100
1974-75	458	41	347	31	320	28	1,125	100
1975-76	283	27	421	40	350	33	1,054	100
1976-77	282	33	211	25	365	42	858	100
TOTALS	4,737	52	2,126	23	2,250	25	9,113	100

[1] (a) Canada Employment and Immigration Commission AOT Act sponsored enrollees in Basic Training for Skill Development (BTSD) Levels I (Grades 0-6), II (Grades 7-8), III (Grades 9-10), and IV (Grades 11-12).

(b) Department of Indian and Northern Affairs sponsored enrollees in 1) BTSD (as described above); 2) Academic programs (Grades 9-12); 3) Industrial Education programs (not vocational skills training) (Grades 11-12); 4) University transfer & college preparatory courses.

programs. As a result, there has been a steady increase in the number of individuals placed in training by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and a decrease in the numbers of trainees sponsored by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

The writer, through discussions with representatives of DINA, CEIC and community colleges throughout B. C. has estimated that from 50 enrollees in 1967/68 increasing to 340 enrollees in 1976/77, a minimum of 2,250 status Indian adults sponsored under the AOT Act have enrolled in BTSD programs (Table 5).

Since fiscal year 1970/71 Canada Employment has purchased BTSD courses which have been conducted in, or in close proximity to Indian communities and for these courses it has been possible to check the names of participants enrolled. A total of 2,126 native enrollees have been identified in these community based BTSD programs. (See Table 5) Large variations in the proportions of successful completions between BTSD levels and between college districts were noted during the compilation of the data. Over the seven year period the proportion of successful completions has been 56.5 per cent.

A total of 6,863 enrollments in BTSD and academic upgrading programs have been confirmed from the records of DINA and CEIC, which together with a conservative estimate of 2,250 additional enrollments in regular institutional programs results in a combined total of 9,113 enrollees during the period 1964-76. Based upon an average completion rate of 57 per cent, approximately 5,194 successful completions in BTSD and academic upgrading programs have been achieved.

The number of enrollees as a proportion of the adult native population over the last ten years has been very high (approximately one enrollee per 3.1 - 3.5 adults) and is indicative of the great demand for these programs. If each trainee had been enrolled in a total of three courses over the twelve year period, approximately one in ten native adults have participated in BTSD or academic upgrading programs.

The Future Need for Academic Upgrading

One characteristic of the Indian population of particular interest to educational planners is the group's continuing rate of growth as indicated by the relatively large proportion of children and adolescents in the population (See Table 6). In the non-Indian population 36.7 per cent are below the age of nineteen and 17.5 per cent are below the age of nine, while for the Indian population 54.4 per cent are below the age of nineteen and 29.0 per cent are below nine years of age. The ratio of non-Indians to Indians in the ten to nineteen year age group is presently 31:1, while the ratio in the under nine year age group is 25:1 and this ratio is continuing to decline as the Indian birth rate remains higher than the non-Indian birth rate and immigration into B. C. from overseas and other provinces continues to decline through the mid 1970's.

TABLE 6

1971 CENSUS OF CANADA DISTRIBUTION OF INDIANS AND NON-INDIANS BY AGE GROUP.

AGE GROUP	NON-INDIANS		INDIANS	
	No.	%	No.	%
> 9	372,395	17.5	15,145	29.0
10 - 14	214,925	10.1	7,095	13.6
15 - 19	194,850	9.1	6,180	11.8
20 - 24	179,975	8.4	4,775	9.1
25 - 34	286,240	13.4	7,330	14.0
35 - 44	251,195	11.8	4,815	9.2
45 - 54	240,360	11.3	2,965	5.7
55 - 64	189,115	8.9	2,095	4.0
< 65	203,145	9.5	2,020	3.9
TOTALS	2,132,200	100.0	52,425	100.0

Although a great deal of progress has been made in improving the native population's levels of educational attainment, there is a continuing need for academic upgrading programs for Indian adults. Indian people today still form the single most underprivileged group in British Columbia in terms of levels of education and employment. According to the 1971 Census:

i) proportionately almost twice as many non-Indians as Indians have completed more than eight years of schooling;
ii) proportionately twice as many Indians as non-Indians have completed only five to eight years of schooling, and
iii) proportionately five times as many Indians as non-Indians have completed less than five years of schooling (See Table 2).

Stanbury reported that in 1971, the unemployment rates for off-reserve Indians were at least four times the overall B. C. rate when a narrow definition of unemployment was used and seven times the B. C. rate when a broader definition was utilized.

Education and vocational training have long been regarded as the most direct paths to employment and to greater participation in the economic benefits of Canadian society. It is possible, however, that the benefits of higher levels of education are only becoming discernible when high school completion levels have been achieved. Stanbury reports that of those urban Indians who were unemployed and who stated that they were seeking work, unemployment increased slightly from less than seven grades completed (29.9%) to grades seven to nine completed (32.3%), and to grades ten and eleven completed (35.7%) (See Table 7). Only with a completed grade twelve did increased levels of education significantly reduce unemployment (10.5%).

A 1973 report prepared for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian on the effectiveness of Indian education in that province stated:

> The results are devastating in the extreme. They reveal virtually no contribution by additional years of schooling to the ability of Indians to earn an income. Most particularly, they suggest, unlike the studies of white population (sic), that

additional schooling does not raise Indian's income earning potential.[1]

Although the Saskatchewan study was conducted with a small population and was methodologically over-simplistic the sample was biased towards establishing a positive relationship between income and schooling by excluding from the analysis all those adults with no income to report! While the Saskatchewan report cannot be used as a basis for making inferences about rural Indian adults in British Columbia, the report does serve to identify the pressing need to investigate the relationship between Indian employment and levels of education in rural British Columbia.

TABLE 7

STANBURY STUDY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION FOR B.C. INDIANS LIVING OFF-RESERVE SUMMER 1971[2]

HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED		SAMPLE SIZE	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE %	LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE %
< 7	M	124	31.3	64.5
	F	136	25.0	17.6
	Total	260	29.9	40.0
7 - 9	M	196	28.3	57.7
	F	180	41.7	26.7
	Total	376	32.3	42.8
10 - 11	M	118	40.7	72.9
	F	104	25.0	38.5
	Total	222	35.7	56.8
> 11	M	120	9.2	81.7
	F	66	14.3	54.0
	Total	186	10.5	71.5

[1] Kelly, A.K., "The effectiveness of Indian Education in Saskatchewan", Indian Education in Saskatchewan, Vol. II, (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, 1973).

[2] Stanbury W.T. assisted by J.H. Siegel, Success and Failure: Indians in Urban Society. (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press) 1975.

Using a broader definition of unemployment which included all those unemployed and seeking work, together with those unemployed and not seeking work, unemployment was found to be approximately fifty per cent for those with less than grade eleven, but only 15.8 per cent for those with grade twelve and higher.

Two additional findings of the Stanbury study are highly important for educational planners. Firstly the effect of additional years of education on the unemployment rate for urban Indians appears to have overcome the traditionally higher unemployment rates among the young. Young Indian adults have higher levels of education than do older Indian adults, and those with the highest levels of education suffer less from unemployment than those with the lowest levels of education.

The second pertinent finding of the Stanbury study is that the rates of participation in the labour market of urban Indians increased with levels of education (See Table 7). The participation rates of those with less than grade seven completed was 40.0 per cent; with grades seven to nine completed participation was 42.8 per cent; with grades ten or eleven completed 56.8 per cent, and with grade twelve and higher the participation rate was 71.5 per cent. Similar results were observed for males and females separately. Unfortunately to the writer's knowledge, no similar data exists to describe the relationship between education and labour market activity for rural Indians in British Columbia.

As high school retention rates gradually improve the demand by young adults for higher level pre-vocational training will increase. It is apparent that the demand for upgrading programs providing basic literacy skills (BTSD I & II) is now declining and the future demand for programs will be for those leading to a grade twelve equivalency at the BTSD IV level or the GED Certificate.

Although some satisfaction can be gained from the improvements in the levels of Indian education over the last ten years there are no grounds in the data for complacency as we enter the 1980's. It can be argued legitimately that

in fact too many educators have been consistently complacent given the magnitude of the numbers of under-educated Indian adults and the consequences of that deficiency in the labour market. Until the educational disparities between Indians and non-Indians have been removed, the most damning indictment of the failure of this province's educators will continue to be existence of native Indians as the single most poorly housed, and most frequently unemployed, unhealthy, alienated, impoverished group of British Columbians.